



THE DESERT CHRONICLE

XXVII, No. 1 MARCH 2018

Summer Seminars at the Monastery

By Fr. Hugh Feiss, OSB

THE MONASTERY OF THE ASCENSION IS LAUNCHING A NEW PROGRAM BEGINNING IN THE SUMMER OF 2019. FOR 50 YEARS THE MONASTERY HAS BEEN OFFERING RETREATS AND enrichment programs and hosting many kinds of gatherings. For twenty-two years we have been offering Road Scholar (formerly “Elderhostel”) programs for adult learners over fifty years old. Beginning in 2019 we will begin hosting a new series of summer seminars for learners of all ages, treating of subjects connected with our mission and way of life and aimed at providing an opportunity for serious study of the Christian tradition, at prices as affordable as we can make them. Three programs are scheduled for 2019:



Lawrence Hundersmarck

Medieval Mystics: Hildegard of Bingen, Julian of Norwich, Bridget of Sweden, The Cloud of Unknowing, Jan van Ruysbroek. #1 (June 10 to 16, 2019) (Presenters/facilitators: Janne Goldbeck PhD, Ezekiel Lotz, OSB, MA, PhD, Fr. Hugh Feiss, OSB, STL, STD).

The Benedictines: 530–1530: 1000 Years of Living Tradition, #1 (June 24–30, 2019) (Presenters/facilitators: Ron Pepin, PhD, Fr. Hugh Feiss, OSB, STL, STD). This course will

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From the Prior's Pulpit

By Fr. Boniface Lautz, OSB

Dear Friends of the Monastery,

There is a lot of snow on the ground outside my window and we have the prediction of more to come by week's end. The snow covers the stems of the daffodils that were beginning to show, bringing the hope of Spring.

The article entitled *Chronicle* in this issue tells much of what has been happening recently. I was fortunate to attend the conference of Benedictine superiors at S. Joseph's Abbey in Louisiana in early February. It is not so much a time for doing business, but gives the participants opportunity to hear talks related to our way of life and to "talk shop" with colleagues. It was very much the case in this year's meeting. Our presentations were about qualities to look for in potential candidates. It was also a good chance to see how it applied to the rest of us. The time for visiting was welcome. Some of our communities are situated at considerable distance for other monasteries and we don't see one another except for times like this.

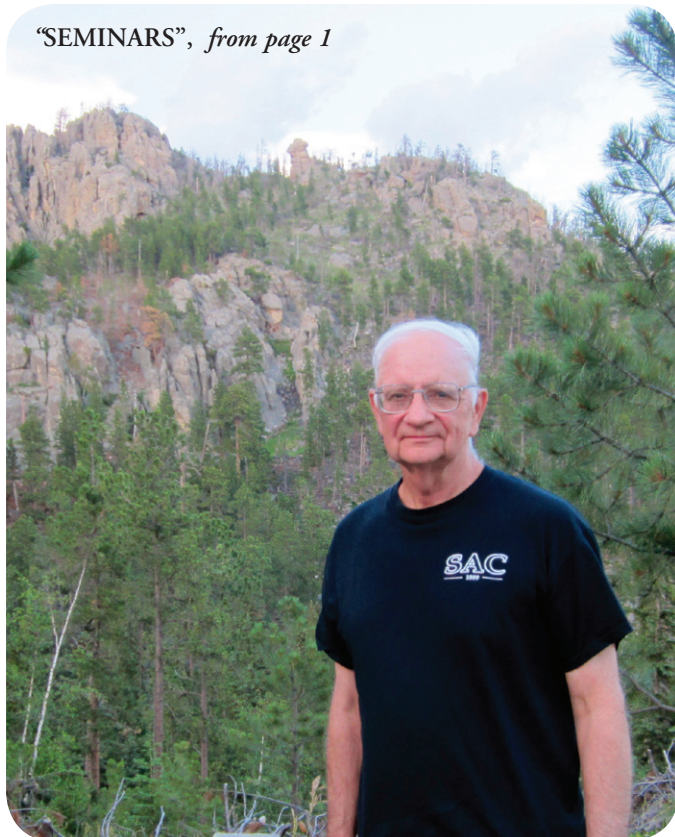
It's the time of year when preliminary plans for Holy Week and Easter liturgies get arranged. Fortunately, with all that is in the computer from last year, the task is fairly simple. We're fortunate to have experienced monks who do not need a lot of preliminary practice. There will be need for practice, but it will be mostly a refresher course.

One of the talks we heard at St. Joseph's was by our Abbot Primate, Gregory Polan, OSB. He spoke about *stability*, which is one of the vows Benedictines profess. It commits us to perseverance; perseverance in a particular community, to a particular way of life and to our seeking God. It includes setting a direction in which we put aside things that could swerve us off the *way*. And for all of us, monastics or not, the *WAY* is Christ. Not a bad thought for Lent.

If all goes according to plan, you will receive this close to Easter. We pray that Easter will bring abundant blessings for all. You are daily in our prayers.

Peace and good things.
Fr. Boniface Lautz, OSB

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Ronald Pepin

be based on *A Benedictine Reader: 530–1530 AD*, edited by the presenters (Liturgical Press/Cistercian Publications, Spring 2019). Copies of the reader will be provided.

Love in Western Philosophy and Christian Theology:

Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, St. Augustine, Aelred of Rievaulx, Thomas Aquinas #1 (July 15-21, 2019) (Presenters: Lawrence Hundersmarck, MA, PhD, Fr. Hugh Feiss, OSB, STL, STD).

A brochure spells out the contents of the course and the texts, which it is recommended participants read ahead of time. These programs are listed as #1, because if there is interest, then, God willing, there will be sequels to them in subsequent years. The programs will run from Monday evening to Sunday morning. All meals are prepared by a chef, who is happy to accommodate special needs. Those who wish can join the monks in Mass and the Liturgy of the Hours. All are welcome to use the monastery library. Enrollment is open now; participants are asked to send a \$100 down payment by June 1, 2019. For further information or to enroll, contact Fr. Hugh Feiss, OSB: Phone 208-761-9389; Cost: commuters (\$300 + meals); resident participants \$600, double occupancy with meals; single occupancy, \$800. For a detailed brochure, to register, or for further information contact Fr. Hugh Feiss, OSB, hughf@idahomonks.org; 208-761-9389. A limited number of scholarships are available for those for whom the cost would be prohibitive. •





Photo by John Wasko

Chronicle

DECEMBER

The funeral for Fr. Norbert was at St. Jerome's Parish on Saturday, December 2. The parish choir sang and the CCW provided a nice luncheon for more than 100. A



Wintery day at the monastery

dozen concelebrants, many people from surrounding parishes, and representatives from churches we have hosted, made for a full congregation. The burial in our cemetery was attended by a large group as well.

In the midst of the above, Christmas preparations took some doing. Br. Sylvester had some help from local volunteers who had the whole house done in two days. The chapel was beautifully done in four hours on Christmas Eve. Christmas was white and windy. Mass at midnight and in the morning had predictably small attendance. The day was celebrated with sharing of gifts, a delicious dinner and a free evening.

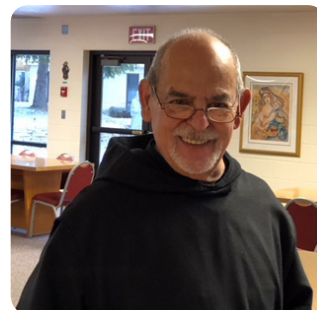
The replacement of the heating and cooling system is under way. Installing the pipe line for propane had to drill through to some rock and took longer than anticipated. Once the project is finished the present cooling tower will be removed and the glycol based system will not be needed. A good friend has serviced that system for years without cost to us. We will miss seeing him, but we won't miss the cooling tower.

JANUARY

Christmas decorations were stored away for another year. What made that noteworthy was that what had taken two days to put up came down and was stored away in three hours, courtesy of the same volunteers who helped put them up.

Another volunteer, Jane Huston, a retired professional librarian spent two weeks cataloging books. Jane is one of our Oblates. She accomplished a lot and said she enjoyed doing it. Talk about a win-win situation.

We have discussed the need for a security system for some time. Cameras are now being installed in our front parking area and in the main lobby close to the bookstore.



Br. Tobiah after his retreat in Hawaii

Br. Tobiah began his sabbatical on the 14th and will be back mid-February. Br. Sylvester had his tonsils removed. Talk about sore throat! He recovers on a soft diet, including ice cream, which he doesn't mind. Fr. Meinrad's nameday was the 21st.

The motor on the kitchen range quit on January 26. The stove was purchased when the community moved to Jerome from Twin Falls in 1980. After lots of deliberation and research the decision was to install a new stove. The new one will run on propane instead of electricity and our cooks say that will be a definite improvement.

FEBRUARY

The HVAC project continues. Weather fluctuates between Winter and Spring, so we eagerly await the ability to regulate temperature. The number of guests has been small. We've kept the ministry center unoccupied so the work could continue. There remains a lot to do.

The guest roster begins to fill. Some of our "regulars" reserved space a year ago and we get requests from new sources. We are fortunate.

The new stove is installed. The process required much coordinating. Our chef, LuAnn did a great job getting it done. The first meal from the new stove was on February 13.



New kitchen equipment

Our planning sessions as we look forward have given us incentive to a realistic awareness of potential future needs, e.g., long term care. The NRRO, National Religious Retirement Office, offers assistance in that kind of planning. We are seeing if they can help us.

Our community retreat begins Sunday, February 25. •





Borders

By Fr. Hugh Feiss, OSB



The Flight into Egypt

WHEN I WAS A TEENAGED FRESHMAN AND SOPHOMORE IN THE SEMINARY COLLEGE, THERE WERE SOME NEWLY-ARRIVED

POST-graduate students taking prerequisites before admittance



to the theology school. They were a God-send, opening my eyes to things I did not hear about in the classes I was taking. One of them introduced me to the art of Georges Rouault, who has been my favorite modern painter ever since. He was born in Paris in 1871 to a poor family.

At fourteen he began a five-year apprenticeship with a stained glass artist. He was then admitted to the prestigious École des Beaux-Arts. He became a painter both of religious subjects and of the people at the margins of polite society, such as clowns and prostitutes. Rouault later dedicated himself to religious subjects. He became a life-long friend of Jacques Maritain, a Catholic philosopher. Rouault's religious paintings centered on the Passion of Christ. Among other themes that he painted was the Flight into Egypt of Joseph, Mary and the child Jesus, who emigrated to escape the murderous rule of Herod the Great.

The flight into Egypt (Matt 2:13–15, 18–19) is an incident that tends to be overlooked in our thinking and preaching about the birth of Christ. In escaping to Egypt, the Holy Family followed a path trod by other Jewish people. The sons of Jacob went to Egypt during a famine (1 Kgs 11:40). After they settled in Egypt under Joseph, the Israelites were mistreated and enslaved. God rescued them at the Exodus. God commanded them, once settled in Palestine, to treat resident aliens in their land kindly. God had taken pity on the Israelites in their exile, and they were to do the same with exiles who sought refuge in their midst: “When an alien resides with you in your land, do not mistreat such a one. You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt. I the Lord am your God” (Lev. 19:33–34; cf. Num 15:14–15). Another Jewish refugee to Egypt was Uriah, a prophet who delivered the same unwelcome message from God as Jeremiah did (Jer 26:21). Uriah was kidnapped in Egypt by agents of the Jewish king, Jehoiaquim, taken back to Jerusalem and executed.

Border

Kapka Kassabova, a native Bulgarian whose family emigrated from Communist Bulgaria to New Zealand, now lives in Scotland. She recently spent two years in Strandja and Rhodope, the



mountainous area where Bulgaria, Turkey and Greece meet. Its edges reach to the Aegean and the Black Seas. She describes her experiences there in *Border: A Journey to the Edge of Europe* (2017). This was an area settled long before Christ by the Thracians. Under the Ottoman Empire (dissolved after World War I), Greeks, Turks and Bulgarians, Muslim and Christian, intermingled there. After World War I and the creation of the nation-states of Greece, Turkey and Bulgaria, there was a vast ethnic cleansing, so that members of the other two ethnic groups in each country were sent across the border to be with their own kind. In one incident a shepherd boy on one side of the border waved, then shouted hello across to a shepherd boy on the other side. For that treacherous act he was sentenced to fourteen years in prison. During the Cold War, the Bulgarian border was very closely guarded. East Germans and others who tried to escape to the West across the Bulgarian border were routinely executed. The Cold War is over, but now Syrians and Kurds trying to cross the border are detained in refugee camps.

The Spring

After two years exploring the area, Kassabova found it hard to pull herself away. Finally, she went to a spring in the cave dedicated to Saint Marina, which has been a sacred place since Thracian times: “I lay under the dripping rock which is really—when you look up—a mountain of living stone, and washed my changing face in the water that doesn’t change, crazy with love for this earth where everything begins with a spring.” Kassabova is not an overtly religious person, but a Christian can think of the infinite, generous love of God, which makes the Trinity three in one, and freely overflows into the being of the universe, each thing sustained by bubbling goodness of God’s gift. The young priest in Bernanos’ *Diary of a Country Priest* (1936), experienced few joys in his ministry, but he persevered, and as his death approached, he realized how much he loved this sorrow-drenched, grace-given world.

An Iranian literary critic pointed out the similarities between Bernanos’ country priest and Pastor Ames in Marilynne Robinson’s *Gilead* (2004). As Ames seeks to forgive and accept his wayward godchild, he discovers that “Wherever you turn your eyes the world can shine like a transfiguration. You don’t have to bring a thing to it except a little willingness to see.”

Glad the Present Exists

The Strandja that Kassabova immersed herself in is changing rapidly: depopulated villages, ruthless mining,

developments along the beaches that could turn the forests into dumps for garbage and worse. Tensions are mounting along the three-sided border, exacerbated by events far away. As she left, a healer named Marina, told her, “Living here I’ve learnt the futility of planning for the future. You are glad if the present exists.”

The present is always on the border of nothingness whence it was created, and eternity, where our faces, and the faces of the world will no longer wrinkle, but will be transfigured always in the excitement of the infinite good flowing over and around them, erasing every border that separates and serves as a killing field. Meanwhile, we need to think about borders. They serve to buffer local cultures from the homogenizing forces of progress as defined by powerful, sometimes greedy, sometimes well-meaning elites, a progress that uproots, depopulates and in many ways oppresses. However, borders can also stultify and imprison. None of us have a permanent home here, and none of us has an unconditioned right to the goods of the world, which God destined for all of us. Like the shepherd boy who hailed his counterpoint across the river, we need to reach across the border; and we need to demolish the border of our selfish, fearful selves, and be washed in a spring of grace that the other represents. Whoever it is, it is a member of the Holy Family. •



Editor's NOTE:

The American bishops urge us to write to our representatives in Congress asking them to enact humane and fair immigration reform and do something to help the DACA students and other "Dreamers" to become citizens. I did write our Idaho representatives:

two ignored me, two answered with a form letter that showed no compassion or empathy for these people.

I know several young men and women who are DACA students. One, let us call her Maria, came to this country when she was six. She is about to graduate from college. She has a marketable skill but it will be very hard for her to get a job without proper papers. She has worried about this enough to get insomnia and an ulcer. Another young woman was a citizen, but her mother was not, though she had lived in the United States for thirty years. The young woman decided to risk everything by going to the immigration office and asking to sponsor her mother for citizenship. Happily, she was allowed to do that, though it will be a long process.

Another friend, Jerome Emanzi, is coming to the end of his quest for American citizenship. Since his saga began, he has graduated from college, found work in another state, married a girl he met in college, and become a parent. Here is his story.



My Immigration Story

By Jerome Emanzi

MY STORY BEGINS WHEN I WAS STUDYING ENGINEERING IN BOISE, IDAHO ON AN F1 STUDENT VISA. BEFORE GRADUATION, I applied for an employee Authorization Document (EAD). An EAD allowed me to legally work in the US under an OPT, 12 months of on-the-job training, which can be extended for another 18 months. While obtaining the EAD card was somewhat smooth, the expense of filing, on top of my tuition and international student fees, was challenging.

However, the real challenge came once I received my EAD. I had exactly three months from the day it was issued to find a job in my field of study, or I would have to leave the country. Finding a job was extremely difficult. Fortunately, with two weeks remaining of the three months period, I was hired as an Engineering Intern in the Seattle area. This was a stressful period because, at that point, I was preparing to return to my home country.

I worked as an intern for twelve months, at which time I applied for the eighteen-month EAD extension. Since I was no longer a student, I needed the company to sponsor my application. However, my company did not have E-verify capability, so I had

to be hired as a contractor through another company with E-verify capabilities, after which I was granted the EAD extension.

Six months later, I was hired as a full-time direct employee, but was already looking ahead to transitioning to a green card (permanent residency) before my eighteen-month extension expired. I was fortunate that my company was willing to sponsor me; however, the cost hiring a lawyer and paying the filing fees would have cost about \$9,000 USD. Given that I was already engaged to my (now) wife, we decided that obtaining my green card through marriage was the better option.

When my wife and I were married, we immediately filed the paperwork for my green card. We are both educated individuals, so we opted not to use a lawyer. The paperwork was terribly complex and confusing and overwhelming, even for two college educated, degree-holding individuals. The idea that this process is easily accessible for the general public, let alone those who aren't perfectly fluent in English, is a terrible misconception. The instructions are written at a 17th grade reading level, the packet took over two months to complete, and we submitted over 80 pages of forms and required evidence. It was a nightmare. The alternative to this headache is hiring a lawyer (in addition to paying filing fees), which many people, including us, can't afford.

We submitted our application packet six months before my eighteen-month extension expired, which we thought would be enough time for it to be processed. To our dismay, that was not the case. I had to take a 30 day leave of absence once my EAD expired. Then, my company had to let me go since I had still not received my green card. For another month and a half we waited and heard nothing. My new wife had just moved from Idaho and was still searching for a job, so we were suddenly without any income or health insurance. With absolutely no information about our application, we filed a special request to expedite my work authorization while my green card was still being processed. Thankfully I received a confirmation letter that my green card was approved and my company hired me back.

It was still another two months before we were summoned for our immigration interview, where we experienced the embarrassing process of proving the legitimacy of our marriage to a complete stranger. Finally I received my green card.

Green cards through marriage carry a two-year restriction, at which time we have to apply to remove the restriction, and once more demonstrate that our marriage is legitimate. We submitted our application at the instructed time and, six months later, have still heard nothing.

To say the process is complicated is an understatement, even for law-abiding, productive, educated members of society. I have been somewhat fortunate, and my situation has not been nearly as extreme as others. Even so, there certainly needs to be change in the immigration system. •





Yolanda, her father, and their horse, before they left Mexico

Reaching My Destiny

By Yolanda Orozco

TWENTY YEARS AGO, ON A COLD EARLY MORNING MY MOTHER WOKE ME UP. SHE RUSHED ME TO GET UP QUICKLY AND PACK my belongings because it was time to go to El Norte as we called the U.S.A. I was just a happy five-year-old girl that loved playing with her dolls and loved wearing beautiful dresses. Before, leaving my home in Mexico, I packed three of my favorite dresses to bring to el Norte but had to leave the rest in Mexico because space was limited. The hardest thing at the time was leaving my dolls that I had gotten as gifts from my father every Christmas he'd come to visit. I remember hiding my dolls in a bag under my bed, promising them that I'd come back for them one day. At the time, I had no idea where my destiny would take me. All I knew is that soon I'd see my father and brother.

I remember getting on my uncle's truck and going for a long ride that seemed an eternity. Before I knew it, I was near the border meeting with "El Coyote," a man who promised to bring my family safely to the U.S. so that we could be reunited

with my father and the brother whom I hadn't seen in years. I remember being told to run nonstop across a land that looked deserted. It was loud and the sound of helicopters flying around with lights pointing down towards the grounds terrified me. My mother kept comforting me and told me that everything would be okay.

At the time, I had no idea what I was doing nor did I know that coming to the U.S. would be life changing. At first, life in the U.S. was very difficult, the food tasted different, school was different, and communicating with others was challenging because I only spoke Spanish at the time. I quickly learned English and adapted to the American lifestyle. I always felt like I belonged here in the U.S. because I attended school here from kindergarten through college and I had spent the majority of my life residing in the U.S. Although I've been spit at by people and been made fun of during my elementary school years because of my language barrier I never gave up on seeking to achieve the American dream. My dream was that I would someday be successful and attain a college degree.

Now that I have reached my dream, I thank my parents for all their hard work and for all their sacrifice to help give us a better life. I one day hope that people accept immigrants like me as part of their own American people. I love living in America and always try my best to make America a better place. The journey here has been like climbing an insurmountable mountain but with hard work reaching the top is possible. I have now reached my destiny, a destiny that I waited so long for. As William Jennings Bryan once said, "Destiny is no matter of a chance. It is a matter of choice. It is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved."•



Editor's NOTE:

Yolanda graduated last spring from Boise State University with an education degree qualifying her to teach health and physical education. The Coyote at the border robbed her and her mother of most of their possession, so she especially cherishes the photo of her father and her in Mexico. She is married and worked the entire time she was in college. She was a DACA student until she became a citizen through her marriage. As the photos show, through everything she never stopped smiling.





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The Benedictine Monks of Idaho, Inc.
Monastery of the Ascension
541 East 100 South
Jerome, ID 83338-5655

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2019

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